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Voices

Rock Valley College
Educational Resources
Center

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Eye

Meagan Van Blaricom



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* denotes this issue's award winners

Me

Stephanie Suhr



The Void

Pam Kinley

A seer cloaked in wisdom
expresses his verdict
a massive army has taken
your land and may overcome it

Rays from the artificial sun will heal
and destroy. Be sure to take
this potion of good intentions

Like a landlubber on the sea
fighting for balance, vomit spews forth,
asteroids clash creating flashes of
light in a black sky

The land redistributes itself as
a volcanic eruption
of limited strength
has shaken it

Cell after cell loses the battle,
life force begins to evacuate,
hearing subsides as the vacuum of
space returns to the void

The Winning Hand

Nate Hays

The most respected poker tournament, The World Series of Poker, has brought 1808 entrants out to the poker tables in search of the \$5,000,000 pay-out. Here at in third day, the record roster has been quickly whittled down to a mere 5 players, including three professionals and two amateurs.

At the final table sits the chip leader, Alfred DuMont, a professional from Atlantic City, who finds himself with only a marginal lead over Hans Mortenson, another professional from Germany. Both individuals have a history of being two of the tightest poker players in the world, betting only when they have the cards to back their bets; yet, have the ability to bluff with the most improbable cards imaginable. In third sits Davin Thompson. This chiropractor from Scottsdale, Arizona finds himself only \$150,000 chips from second. Davin's love of poker has been honed and polished over the years with help from his father and home games played regularly with comrades. Fourth place is held by Roger Dobson another professional currently behind the pack and fifth belongs to short stack Robert Hawkinson, whose luck has been running out.

The players are rather eager to get back into the game, but are rather worn down after three strenuous 10-hour days at the tables. The first hand of Texas Hold 'Em, after the dinner break, finds Davin Thompson with the dealer button. Following clockwise along the circular table sits Roger, then Hans,

followed by Robert, and finally Alfred. The dealer passes the hole cards to each player. Action is on Robert to make his decision, as he can opt to call the big blind (a forced-bet), raise the forced-bet, or fold his hand. Fold. Alfred peeks in at his cards and liking what he sees, he raises the big blind to an even \$50,000.

Davin peers down at his cards, looking slowly, he discovers an Ace. It is the Ace of Spades: the strongest card in the deck. He reacts by not reacting so that the predators sitting around him will be unable uncover a tell on his cards. Now for the second hole card, another Ace is discovered. This time a diamond. He quickly lets his cards back on the table and mulls over how to play the hand. To raise Alfred's bet or to keep others in the hand and only call the \$50,000?

"Call" says Davin.

The action moves over to Roger, who grudgingly calls the bet to see the flop, as does Hans. Davin is delighted to see four-way action going to the flop, the first three community cards, knowing he sits dominantly with his hand.

The flop comes Seven, King, Seven, all of different suits. Action is now on Roger, he checks, followed by a quick check by Hans, now Alfred waits. He begins stacking chips as if to bet, but decides to check. Now Davin has the option to bet, which he plans to. With the board showing two Sevens and a King, Davin

already has Pocket Rockets, slang for two Aces, so he knows that he can beat anyone who has a King in their hand since his two pair will be stronger.

"\$75,000", says Davin, as he plans to weed through the other competitors. Roger and Hans contemplate options slowly and critically, eventually opting to call but Alfred folds his hand. Now for "The Turn", the fourth community card on the table to be used by all players. Slowly, knowing the growing anticipation of the crowd and competitors, the dealer places the next card on the board. Seven of Clubs.

"\$200,000", Roger states firmly. The eyes of both Davin and Hans jet over to Roger's direction. What's under there? Must either be an Ace or a King. Hans raises \$200,000.

Now to Davin. He stops, thinking to himself, "I have two Aces giving me a Full House; chances are that both of the others have a King in their hand." "I call" states Davin, as does Roger by quickly calling. Now the pot has totaled \$1,025,000, a record pot size for the current tournament. Whoever wins the hand now will be in a dominant chip position nearing the end of the tournament.

One final card is yet to come, "The River". Slowly, again, the dealer situates that final card on the board. Ace of Hearts. Davin feigns from looking at his chips, as the others may realize how powerful he has now become. Roger opts to check.

"\$500,000" declares Hans.

Laughing inside, knowing his Full House, Aces over Sevens, is good he contemplates how to bet. "I'm All-In", asserts Davin. A raise of \$450,000 for a total of \$950,000 for Roger to call, who would also have to move All-In if he wished to call, which he does. The dealer counts out his chips and levels the pot for side betting to occur between Hans and Davin. Meanwhile, Hans has been quietly staring down Davin. Davin has not even returned a glance to Hans as he has been staring at his lucky charm the whole time, a miniature spine, received from his father after completing his schooling.

"I call" states Hans.

Quickly Roger laughs and flips over his two Kings.

"Full House! Kings over Sevens!"

Davin sits back in his chair and tries to console Roger before flipping over his Aces, showing his better Full House. "I'm sorry Roger, but I think I've got you beat." Roger is astonished and quickly stands up in agony. Davin can do nothing but smile knowing his luck has arrived and he will now be taking a commanding chip lead nearing heads-up action.

Left to show, or possibly muck his hand, is Hans. "Wow guys, I hate to do this to you, but..." He flips over only one card. The Seven of spades. Davin rakes over the card and realizes defeat. His heart stops. He played perfectly and had read his opponents precisely, but now he finds himself in Roger's place, eliminated from the tournament with nothing left but despair.

Converse Girl

Erin Kirkpatrick



Rose

Linda Faye Jackson

I am a Rose, a flower like no other. I'm not a Lily, nor an African Violet. I am unique, but every color of the rainbow. My petals bloom as they stretch forth to greet the morning sun. My leaves spread open and capture the warmth of the morning star. I grow wider still. My roots are my hands that grasp the soil and stabilize by very being. I sway in the wind that helps me grow stronger. I soak up the nectars of the sky that quench my thirst, and wet me all over. Don't pluck me just because I'm beautiful. In the womb of my stigma there grows a seed that may one day develop into a black rose like me. I multiply with love and care. Stop and smell the unusual perfume, maybe even stare. A Rose is a Rose is a Rose.

No Rest Here

Pam Kinley

Chirping and whirring sounds
Stop me in my tracks.
The thrumming of the cricket
Responds to its own beat.
Soothing and playing its calm melody.

The mood changes as a rush of
turbulence,
shouts to be heard. Strident,
clashing, shoving its way
to the ears.

Silken fingers begin to caress and
gentle me, it whispers softly in my ear,
goosebumps rise. I'm lost in the
sensation and prepare for
quiet reflection.
Sound builds around me,
an orchestra, strident and slightly out of tune, plays a
mad cacophony of sound, an invisible force, pushing,
shoving, impelling me to move along,
There's no rest here.

Girl in Glasses

Erin Kirkpatrick



Saint

Jeung Yong Park



In My Little Shell

Joe Kazlaurich

When I'm overcome with stress
And things aren't going well
I rest my head upon my hands
And go into my shell

The shell that blocks all stimuli
And gives my brain a rest
With it I can endure all
But am I cursed or blessed?

Don't try to ask me questions
Don't tell me what to do
Don't try to make me leave my shell
You can't break through

Inside my shell it's cozy
It's quiet, safe, and warm
My patented solution
To the loud oppressive swarm

The world is non-existent
When I'm in my little shell
I need a break from life, you see
The world can go to hell

Man of God

Stan McCord

The Reverend Franklin Withers was full of The Spirit.

Just two years ago, he had been laboring in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, where he served as a minor administrator in an orphan's home. There he had met Julio, a young man who had told him about his birth tribe deep in the Amazon forest. Julio had been captured by a neighboring tribe as a youth. That tribe had then been assimilated into the main stream culture after the Brazilian government seized their tribal land for development. Julio had been brought to Rio, and had found his way to the orphan's home and to Reverend Withers.

Julio was too old for adoption, but the Reverend had found him enough work to meet his meager needs. In the evenings, the Reverend would read the Bible to Julio, and opened to him the mystery and wonder of God and the Savior. Reverend Withers baptized Julio himself and was thrilled at the young man's new found belief. Still, he knew Julio was troubled, knew he longed for the deep greens of the forest, the clean air, the cool streams, the abundant game and his people. Reverend Withers longed for a chance to display his evangelical fervor. He persuaded Julio to take him back to his village, so he might show Julio's

brethren the way.

Many years had passed since Julio had been home, and he and the Reverend wandered for months through the jungle. They encountered other tribes, who warned them against contact with the fierce and untamed Kalaxipi. The pair was undaunted, and finally succeeded when a Kalaxipi hunting party stumbled across them. The Kalaxipi had never seen a white man, and did not tolerate intruders, so Julio and the Reverend were captured, bound and sentenced to torture and execution. When Julio began to sob and babble in his long lost tongue, one of the elders of the party recognized him. The execution turned into a joyful reunion, and the Reverend was spared for bringing Julio home.

Reverend Withers was appalled and disgusted at the life style of the Kalaxipi. Male and female roamed about naked, which caused uncomfortable stirrings in the Reverend's soul. Their bodies were garishly painted, and long thistles were pierced through their flesh in the most unlikely and unseemly places. There seemed to be no family units, the adults moved about freely from hut to hut, and the children belonged to none and everyone. It took a long while and many, many sermons and readings of the Word

before the Reverend instilled shame into the minds of the Kalaxipi. It took even longer for him to convince the tribe that each man should have just one woman. There were many fights and jealous confrontations as the Reverend wedded pair after pair in Holy Union. Countless hours were spent instructing the Kalaxipi of their sinful ways, and countless more to teach them how to be saved from their sins.

The Reverend expounded upon the prophets, the Israelites and the Wrath of God. The Kalaxipi trembled in fear at the power of the Almighty. They were awed by the tales of Moses, David and Jonah, soothed by the psalms and gospels, the love of Jesus, and of his terrible sacrifice to free his brethren from sin.

They were inspired by the epistles of Paul and James and John. True, the Reverend had a great deal of trouble translating the wonder of the Word into the grunts and gibberish of the Kalaxipi, but Julio helped and the Reverend was sure the Kalaxipi understood the gist of his messages. The very proof surrounded him, the Kalaxipi had joined together to build a church for worship. It was crude, to be sure, but it was a church and it was his, built for the Glory of the Father.

The Reverend stood inside that church and gazed upon his flock and let the Word pour forth. Easter was near, and the Spirit filled him with vigor, and his shouts of the Glory of Jesus echoed through the jungle and hushed the jaguars, the cockatoos and

the chattering monkeys. Tears streamed down his face as he told of the passion, the suffering of Jesus, and how that suffering had freed the Jews from the bondage of sin. The Kalaxipi were entranced and marveled at the story. They wept in shame of their own sins. They, too, longed to be free. For days afterward, the Kalaxipi hid themselves in the forest and their huts, ashamed to be seen by the Reverend.

Then, just a few days before Easter, on a cloudless morning, the Reverend was shaken awake by an exuberant Julio. Early morning sunlight streamed down through the palm fronds. Reverend Withers staggered from his hut and beheld the people of the village lined on either side of a narrow path. At the end of the path two men stood beside a huge upright wooden cross. The villagers beamed and shouted in joy as the Reverend stepped forth. As he passed the first in line, he felt a stinging on his back. He looked and saw that the men held whips made from grass rope and thorns. He stumbled forward and felt more stings, more whips, then thuds from sticks. Blood poured down his arms and back, ran down his face into his eyes. Blows rained upon him and forced him to his knees, yet he pushed on. He raised his bloodied face and wiped his eyes and beheld the men by the cross. They held ropes in their hands, and tears ran down their brown faces as they shouted....

SAVIOR SAVIOR SAVIOR!!!!

Pen and Ink Monument

Scott Fustín



Voice in the Wind

Hannah Kasper

Making a difference is no easy task
When you're nothing but normal
And average at best

Much like a voice in the wind
Words fall on deaf ears
Same goes for eyes that are blinded
By selfish ambition

CARE, you lifeless people!
Wake up! And show some compassion!
The tides will change if we make an effort
And this will be our generation's lasting impression.

Recent Moments Past

Jethro Fisher

There are the ragged
Lines of strip malls,
They stand together,
Intimidate what was
The town itself. Between
Billboards and bright
Commercial boxes, below
A shy green dumpster,
There is a hidden past
Written in strata
Of burger wrappers, sodas,
Flattened cylinders,
Grounded shopping bags,
Below that even lies
A crankshaft, an arrowhead
And a t-shirt which reads
Vallejo county fair,
Nineteen seventy-four

Notte di disperazione

Joe Kazlaurich

The daylight fades, the evening slips away
Exhausted, I retire to my tomb
To question life and lick my bitter wounds
To swear I'll never waste another day
Whatever paths I take along the way
To live and die is every mortal's doom
Oh why was I conceived within the womb
If only for a twilight hour's play?

My hopes and dreams will never bear me fruit
Unless I stay awake another hour
Yet every man surrenders into sleep
I come to understand the somber truth
The flow of time is not within my power
Futility can make a strong man weep

Smoking

Jeung Yong Park



Metaphorical Family

Gabriel Zammit

My family is a malfunctioning T.V. where everything used to be crystal clear and is now surrounded by gray areas.

My father is the screen, often neglected when fuzzy but still trying to get the message through.

My mother is the transmitter, who knows what to do and how to work, and somehow is cut off by different circumstances.

My two oldest brothers Charles and Luke are the buttons not always used, who nonetheless serve a purpose.

My sister Elizabeth is the sound that allows everyone else to hear what is needed, but her voice is not always loud enough when they listen.

My youngest brother Drew is the remote control, constantly changing and trying to manipulate goings-on.

Finally there is myself, Gabriel. I am the power supply, often forgotten about but still vital to the others' operations.

Green Eye

Erín Kirkpatrick



Wood Bowls

Patrick Karceski



Iron Necessity, Business Reality

Bryan Hayward

Iron necessity, according to one famous philosopher, is usually neither iron nor necessity. Genius finds a way to make it superfluous, like snake oil, or woolly, like a good sweater that bends to your shape. Luckily, profound insights into the heart of the universe aren't required to shatter the facade of the oft-repeated phrase "business reality." Lackeys who use this term are not running the business, but feed off it like the flatworm in the intestine, surrounded by business, in part driving its machinations, coiling inside it larger and larger until its host chokes on the bloated parasite. The genesis of this vicious cycle is the willing victim swallows the worm in the form of publicly offering stock. The worm is swimming in the vital water of money. But the end is usually the same. The host can't feed the bloodsucker any longer, and the lackey abandons the host in search of more fecund feeding grounds. The host often dies then, but not before its vital organs are sacrificed in a vain attempt to save itself by downsizing, like an Ebola victim sloughing blood and gut to be rid of the virus. Any poison strong enough to kill the parasite too often kills the host, and that is the reality of business.

The Child Within

Melissa Neubert





Interview with Shu-Huei Henrickson

Bryan Hayward

Shu-Huei Henrickson is a working author and a tenured professor in the Composition/Literature faculty at Rock Valley College.

Writing Process

- Q. Is writing an obsessive struggle? A zen joy? Somewhere in between?
- A. Writing to me is both a job and a struggle. Sometimes the writing writes itself; sometimes I need to be disciplined enough to sit down and produce some text.
- Q. Do you need a routine, or is it something you can do spontaneously?
- A. I need both routine and spontaneity. Routine is a must when the muse is not upon me.
- Q. Do you do lots of research during or before sitting down to write?
- A. I tend to do my research during the writing process. I'm not an organized sort of person, and I often don't know what I'm thinking until I start writing. In short, to me writing is a discovery process, so usually I need to see where the story/essay is taking me before I know what areas of research I need to conduct.
- Q. What emotional states affect (hinder, help) your writing, and how?
- A. I know that I can't be depressed. During the winter I'm usually affected by the weather and am not at all productive.
- Q. Does plot take primacy in your prose?
- A. I would say yes, plot is important. But I do work a lot with images too. I often tell people I write with images/pictures in my head.
- Q. When you use symbols, is it conscious or not? Some of both?
- A. Use of symbols is sometimes conscious, sometimes not. I don't like to over use symbols though. I think overly heavy handed symbolism is a flaw in academic creative writing.
- Q. Are you bi-lingual? If so, how does it affect your writing? Do you find some ideas don't translate well, or at all?
- A. Yes, some of my images and descriptions are influenced by my first language. I can't help it, especially when the setting is in Taiwan. I do notice that when the setting is in the U.S. my prose is not as affected by my first language. Translation in itself is a difficult exercise. But I do believe all ideas can be translated somehow.

Revision

- Q. Is this part fun or not?
- A. Revision is sometimes fun, but not always. For me, the revision process normally takes longer than the time it takes to produce the first draft.
- Q. What is your approach? Do you wait, do you do a total re-write, a general fix?
- A. I use a mix of techniques. It depends on the situation.
- Q. Do you toss an entire work if it needs too much revision?
- A. Yes, sometimes it works better to toss an entire work and start over.
- Q. Who critiques your work, if anyone, before you send to a publisher? (family/friends reliable?)
- A. I'm very shy about showing other people my work. usually nobody critiques my work. but right now I do have an agent who's critiqued my novel twice.

Politics/philosophy

- Q. Do you consciously inject politics/philosophy into your work?
- A. Yes, sometimes, but I try not to. I don't like to read work with heavy handed didacticism, so I try not to impose my politics on my work.

Publishing

- Q. Do publishers offer advice in rejection letters?
- A. Only when a publisher wants to publish your work do they offer advice.
- Q. Is there a lot of pressure for "face time" (signings, picture on book covers)?
- A. I hope you're not under the impression that I'm some big writer. I'm only an aspiring writer. I haven't encountered the face time issue.
- Q. How do you deal with editors – are they strictly for proofreading or do they assist with content editing?
- A. So far the editors I've dealt with are extremely good writers. They don't just copyedit. They offer real suggestions for improvement.

Life experiences

- Q. What sort of unusual life experiences have you had that propelled you to write?
- A. I don't think unusual life experiences have propelled me to write. I think I have to write because I was born that way.
- Q. What experiences provided the best fodder for writing?
- A. I don't believe there's a necessary connection between life experience and writing. So many people have lived amazingly complex/interesting/adventurous lives, but they're not necessarily good writers.

Paradise Lost

Tom Smith

Falling into Place

Tom Smith



Final Dive

Scott Fustin



Black Lace and White Oleander

Matt Wasmund

Bikini kill and civil pander
Imbrued black lace and white oleander
Twisted and gnarly cloud
Smoke amorphous kept aloof
Bitter taste personification
In a fog of defecation
Oozing truth, atypical slander
Masses uncouth to the world of Alexander
Great and tyrannical, the world lays a buzz
And I am here, sinking above
Bile and pitch, drip, drip, drips
And your heinous laughter leaves me a stitch
Abuse and childish canter
The reign of black lace and white oleander
Facial screams and dreams
The tortured macabre
Leaves me breathless, strangled with sob
The world a blanket, heavy and smothering
Misconstrued pure and deitously motherly
My place isn't rooted as of anger pine
My soul is not attached to my mortal spine
Leaping bounds, twitching bloody glamorous
Lapping sorrow, clenched amorous
The land is my bed, I rest on my head
Pondering the pandermment, death and monstrous

While Washing

Lindsey Buss

White hands, knuckles rubbed pink
by the stone edge of a well,
too tender for life's demands
in this far away land.

My rhythmic scrubbing
is interrupted.

A small voice,
clear like the well water,
free like the well water,
lyrical like the spring it comes from-
sings into my afternoon chore.

"What do people eat, where you come from Ma'am?"

My gaze, turned from the day's washing,
rests now-
on a small brown frame with shiny black plaited hair:

My eyes accustom to the new contrast.
So dark, yet so bright.
Not like the harsh white
of my infant son's diapers,
strung out along a half made fence
and bleached by the sun;

but bright from the inside.

"Food, just like anyone else I suppose," I reply.
Eyelashes bat in doubtful acceptance.

I smile,

and the vast worlds between us
become part of the day's wash,
their distance scrubbed away;

with rhythmic movements of tenuous conversa-
tion,
strung out, along the cultural fence between us.

Escaping Herself

Darcy Breault

She had had enough.
Ending up at pity parties.
 Personal angst the guest of honor.
Her best friend was blame.
 Both were sleeping with drama.
Distractions dangled before her eyes,
 Encouraging her to want more.
Monumental achievements of success,
 Set for her a tight routine and schedule.
She sold her intent at the pawnshop,
 Purchased excuses off bargain racks.
Regret filled her mind with fear.
 Feeling her life was a fleeting moment,
Mortality an unfavorable timekeeper-
 Tick, Tick, Ticking Away.
And so she chose to run.

She fled from everything she knew,
knowing no one and nothing.
And after she had
 been
 gone
 for
 some
 time,
 she
 returned
 to
 say,
That it was herself,
 She had needed to get away from.

Photo Friendly

Jessica Mortenson



Swan

Meagan VanBlaricom



Squirrels

Jethro Fisher

Three of them,
Lean, winter hungry
Raid the dumpster
Behind the school.
Pizza today,
They pry the cardboard
Open, Catapult
Off the black plastic
Lid Onto maples
That lean like gossips
Against the chain links.

They leap
From tree to tree,
Silhouetted,
Framed against the sky,
Slices dangle
From their mouths
Like lead fans.
They are young,
Two, three years old
Not like the bull
Male who fears no one,
Who taunts Rottweillers
Guarding the black topper's
Garage next door.

Fanfare

Jethro Fisher

Black beans,
Your shine swallows light,
Captures the fierce glare
Of equatorial sun.
Buries it below the thin leaf mold.
Released, your peat brine
Preserves the dawn's precise light.
Your aroma rises, cradles
The smear of my sleep
Cast face, your dull machete
Hacks the crust from my eyes.

Black beans,
Reduced to loam,
Swollen by tropical rain,
Your liquor breaches the
Thin filter between vegetable
Spirit and animal need.
In your glass beaker,
A formula which reduces
Coarse minutes to polished hours.

Black beans,
Who tasted you first?
The goatherd whose flock
Clipped red berries, rolled
Their golden eyes like suns?

Did he beat the tambour
That night of first infusion?
Did he read your futures,
Your bundles traded widely
In the pebbled divination
Left in his earthen cup?

Black beans,
Divine organic compound,
Alkali enforcer of wakefulness,
Your teak and gun metal flavor
Washes over my tongue,
Speaks of heat, green thoughts
Of your pleasures and the whip.
You are driver and dancer,
Your business of floral competition,
Fired fruit, glazed thunder,
Cast lightning, sober frenzy
Fills my cup again.

Natural Beauty

Emily Christiansen



Spring Weight

Jethro Fisher

Forget about money
About its leafy rustle
Its thick green folds
Thick with hours spent
With time converted
Time's alter ego
Alternate to barter.

I'd like to walk
Out of my house
And swim away from
Its sack like weight.

Or even better than
A swim would be
One summer night
After winter's work.

Rather than working
Then empty billfolds
Empty selves, sir
Selfish trait of your
Trade in yourself
In bodies and time
Bodies stacked and filed

To Market, To Market-Through the Desert We Go

Lindsey Buss

The vast open arid landscape
stretches out unimaginably before me.

and now, equally so,
behind me.

No insectal hummmmmmm
to accompany the heat of the day.
No breeze
to alter its descent from above.

So hot,
the world is frozen still.

Parched Cracked Silent

Except for the dull flop
of the donkey's hooves, as they
meet the desert floor.

My two small children
(secured on his back)
bob back and forth like ducks,
lulled
by rocking up and down the spines
of watery undulations.

Sleeping.

Their fiery cheeks shiny,
flush, round and soft.

A misplaced trio,
in this colorless land.

Street Lights

Ryan Burritt

The streetlights glow
Upon her face
The Wind's chill
Through garments lace

One never loving
One never loved
While pale yellow light
Shines from above

Empty hearts
Meet empty souls
Paying for love
In the street lights glow

Orange Woman

Kristy Lungo



I am so sorry

Joe Kazlaurich

If it's been more than an hour
You get mad if I don't call
You're eternally complaining
You will not accept my faults

You have to see me every day
Or we get in a fight
We make love in the afternoon
You make me cry at night

We're opposite as two can be
We hate each other's games
But if I try to leave you
You will likely go insane

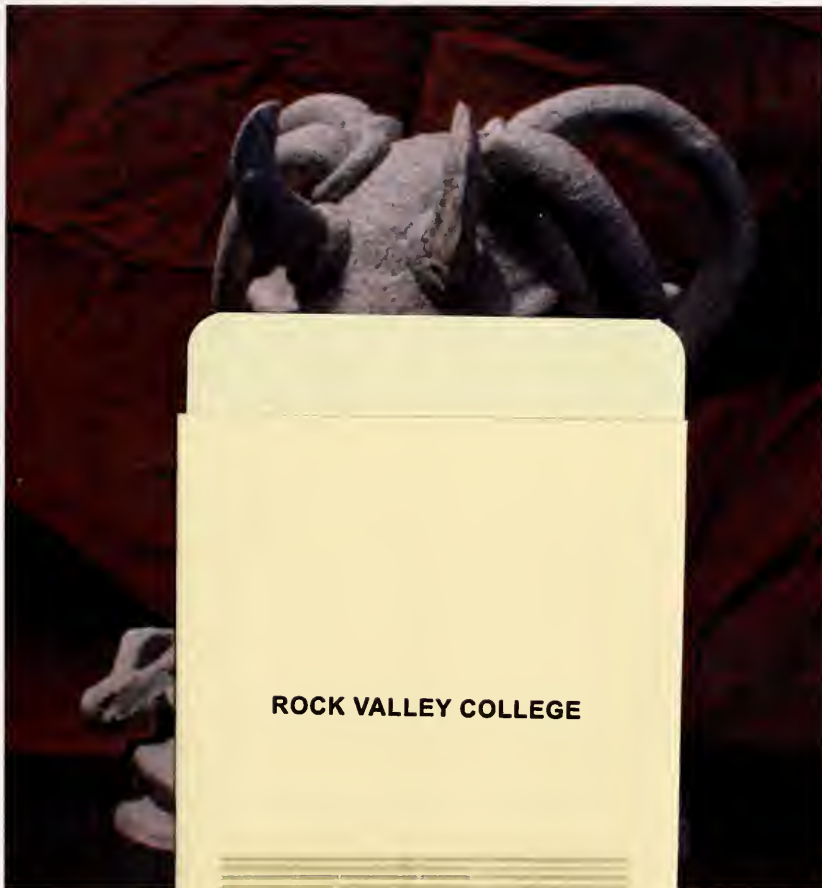
I can't stand to be around you
But you'll love me for all time
So I'm left with this decision
Should I break your heart or mine?

Oh, I am so sorry.



Medusa

Jeremy Petersen



ROCK VALLEY COLLEGE

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